



April 6-8, 2018 -- Another scientist, another suspicious death

publication date: Apr 6, 2018

[Previous](#) |

April 6-8, 2018 -- Another scientist, another suspicious death

The discovery of the body of Harvard-educated Dr. Timothy Cunningham in the Chattahoochee River in Atlanta bears an eerie similarity to the December 2001 discovery of the body of Harvard virologist Dr. Don Wiley in the Mississippi River.

Cunningham, an epidemiologist with the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in Atlanta, [pictured left] had been reported missing since February. Cunningham was last witnessed leaving work on February 12.



Atlanta law enforcement authorities, who had earlier termed Cunningham's disappearance "unusual," were quick to rule his death an accidental drowning with no "foul play" suspected. However, Cunningham's car was left in the garage at his home. Additionally, Cunningham's driver's license, credit cards, keys, wallet, mobile phone, and passport were left in his home. At a news

conference held on February 27 by the Atlanta Police Department, Major Michael O'Connor said, "It is not common in missing-person cases for us to find someone's entire belongings."

Even more suspicious is that Cunningham's beloved Tibetan spaniel, "Bo," had been left unattended at his home. Cunningham was single.

In March, CDC's director denied an earlier Atlanta Police Department statement that Cunningham may have been despondent over his failure to receive a promotion. The CDC director pointed out that this was false and Cunningham had received a promotion in July 2017.



Fulton County Chief Medical Examiner Dr. Jan Gorniak could only make a positive ID of Cunningham's body using dental records, an indication that the body was severely decomposed. Police discovered that Cunningham was wearing jogging shoes and had three collectible crystals in his pocket. Major O'Connor stated, "We may never be able to tell you how he got into the river."

Cunningham's body was initially discovered by two fishermen. The body was stuck in mud along the riverbank. A spokesman for the Atlanta Fire Department admitted that the body "could have moved there later," adding, "There's just no way to tell due to the rise and fall of the river." The fire department said the area where Cunningham was found was searched after he was initially reported missing and there was no sign of the body.

Cunningham, a commissioned U.S. Public Health Service officer, was involved in leading-edge research on viruses like Zika and Ebola. Cunningham focused on the vectors between such viral outbreaks and race, gender, and geography. With controversial research being conducted by a number of countries into developing genetic-based biological weaponry, Cunningham's work may have posed a threat to certain quarters.

The investigation of Cunningham's disappearance was initially plagued by fake news reports on the Internet that he had blown the whistle on the dangers posed by the flu vaccine. These were rapidly debunked.

The Atlanta Police appear anxious to close the Cunningham case, as they put it, "fairly soon."

The attitude of the Atlanta police is similar to that of the Memphis police who investigated Dr. Wiley's disappearance on November 15, 2001. Wiley, a noted virologist at Harvard Medical School, was in Memphis to accept an award at a banquet held by St. Jude's Children's



Hospital. Wiley served on the hospital's scientific advisory board. Wiley was also concentrating his efforts on determining the source of the anthrax distributed in October 2001 via the U.S. Postal Service. The bacteria killed a number of people around the country. The receipt of anthrax-laden letters at the U.S. Congress was used as an excuse to shut down the Senate and House of Representatives during their deliberation on passing the USA PATRIOT Act, following the 9/11 attack.



In both the cases of Wiley and Cunningham, the presence of their bodies in rivers -- the Mississippi and Chattahoochee, respectively, made any attempt to conduct a full toxicological examination impossible. The presence of a corpse, which was administered a lethal injection, in water for even a small amount of time renders the ability to discover the presence of a toxin or agent practically impossible. That is because blood is primarily composed of water. Poisons located in the blood stream are rapidly diluted as water enters the body.

For this reason, disposing of bodies in rivers and estuaries like the Chesapeake Bay -- a favorite repository for the Central Intelligence Agency -- is the preferred method to cover the tracks of those committing homicide by administering either truth serums like sodium pentathol or lethal agents like cyanide or arsenic.

Wylie was a renowned expert on not only anthrax, AIDS, herpes, and influenza, but like Cunningham, Ebola. On November 15, 2001, Wiley's abandoned 2001 Mitsubishi Galant rental car was strangely found in the wrong lane, west in the eastbound lane of the Hernando de Soto bridge. The keys were still in the ignition, the gas tank was full, the hub cap of the right front wheel was missing, and there were yellow scrape marks on the driver's side of the vehicle, indicating a possible sideswipe. Police quickly "concluded" that Wiley committed suicide by jumping off the Interstate 40 bridge into the Mississippi River. It appears the early police conclusion, decided without a full investigation, was engineered by the FBI.



On December 20, Wiley's body was recovered in the river in Vidalia, Louisiana, 320 miles south of Memphis. After Wiley's friends and family discounted claims of suicide, the Shelby County coroner concluded on January 14, 2002, that Wiley had "accidentally" fallen over the side of the bridge after a minor car accident. No one in the history of the span had fallen over the side. Wiley was heading back to his father's residence in Millington, northeast of Memphis, at the time of his disappearance.

Just as with the Atlanta police falsely claiming that Cunningham was upset over his failure to be promoted, friends of Wiley were suddenly deluged with false and unsubstantiated rumors that Wiley was a heavy drinker and despondent. None of it was true.

In yet another strange twist, on March 14, 2002, a bomb and two smaller explosive devices were found at the Shelby County Regional Forensic Center, which houses the morgue and Medical Examiner's Office that conducted Wiley's autopsy. Dr. O.C. Smith, the medical examiner and a U.S. Naval Reserve Captain, told Memphis' *Commercial Appeal*, "We have done several high-profile cases from Dr. Wiley to Katherine Smith (a Department of Motor Vehicles employee mysteriously found burned to death in her car after being charged in a federal probe with conspiracy to obtain fraudulent drivers' licenses for men of "Middle East origin") but there has been no indication that we offended anyone . . . we just don't know if we were the intended target or not."

Based on a tip it received, the National Security Investigation Unit of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) in Ottawa asked the Memphis police if they had any information that would indicate that Wiley was the target for an abduction by terrorists. Shockingly, the Memphis police fed the RCMP the same line it was feeding the Wiley family and the media: "There was no evidence to support the theory that Wiley's disappearance was the result of foul play and that suggestions to the contrary were being mentioned only in the media."

On June 2, 2002, a security guard at the Medical Examiner's office found Dr. Smith in his office bound and gagged. Smith also had a lye solution rubbed into his eyes. Smith's mouth was wrapped with barbed wire and a motion-sensitive bomb was strapped to his chest. [pictured right] When this reporter interviewed Smith after the incident, he said he was originally torn on his assessment of Wiley's death being a suicide. He revealed that he could have very easily ruled it a homicide, save for a minor clue of a broken button on Wiley's shirt, indicating a high-velocity impact onto the surface of the Mississippi River from the bridge.



Even more bizarrely, in 2004, Bud Cummins, the George W. Bush-appointed federal prosecutor in Little Rock, later charged Smith with faking the assault in his office, claiming the medical examiner bound and gagged himself and strapped the bomb to his chest. In 2005, Cummins's case fell apart with a hung jury refusing to find Smith guilty. Smith's defense was bolstered by testimony in his favor by members of the Memphis Police Department and the Shelby County District Attorney's office. Terry Harris, the U.S. Attorney in Memphis, originally recused himself from the case because he had a close professional relationship with Smith.



The coroner of Vidalia, Louisiana, where Wiley's body was found on December 15, a month later, told this reporter that she doubted Wiley could have been in the Mississippi River from for an entire month. When his body was discovered on the Louisiana side of the river, Wiley's clothing was intact and a piece of hard candy from the Peabody Hotel was still in his jacket pocket. The coroner also claimed that the chain of custody of Wiley's body had been mishandled. Instead of it being transported directly from a Vidalia funeral home to the Shelby County medical examiner's office in Memphis, it took an unauthorized detour to the University of Mississippi Medical Center in Jackson. The Vidalia coroner also believed Wiley's death had something to do with "terrorists," but she offered no details.

A week before his disappearance, Wiley attended a session on "Bioethics and Research" at a meeting of the Howard Hughes Medical Institute in Chevy Chase, Maryland. At the time of the conference, four people had already been killed from being exposed to anthrax-laden letters sent through the mail. It was later discovered that the anthrax originated from the U.S. Army Medical Research Institute for Infectious Diseases at Fort Detrick, Maryland.

Wiley had also received a letter from a failed PhD student at University College in Dublin, Ireland that sought to warn him about the origins of anthrax. In October 2001, a series of "white powder" samples were discovered at University College. Irish Army specialists transferred all the samples to Britain's Porton Down bio-warfare facility, the UK's equivalent of Fort Detrick. Russia is claiming that the Novichok nerve agent allegedly used to poison ex-Russian spy Sergei Skripal and his daughter Yulia Skripal in Salisbury, England is stockpiled at the nearby Porton Down facility.

The similarities between the deaths of Cunningham and Wiley, as well as the culpability of the Atlanta and Memphis Police Departments in rushing to judgment in their investigations, point to larger back stories. The *carte blanche* acceptance of police and medical examiner conclusions in both cases by a lapdog media, pointedly, the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* and *Memphis Commercial Appeal*, creates more questions and provides very little in the way of answers.

Generally, readers are solely responsible for the content of the comments they post on this web site. Comments are subject to the site's terms and conditions of use and do not necessarily reflect the opinion or approval of Wayne Madsen Report.com. Readers whose comments violate the terms of use may have their comments removed without notification. Please do not post hate messages as this is a violation of British laws against racist and xenophobic messages. WMR's web service is based in Wales, UK and is subject to UK law.

[Back to top](#)

[Previous](#) |